CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINETY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 7 March 2002, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Fisseha Yimer (Ethiopia) (Egypt)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 896th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I should like to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to the Minister of National Defence of Romania, His Excellency Mr. Ioan Mircea Pascu, who will address the Conference. His presence among us today will no doubt contribute to our efforts to forge an agreement on the programme of work of the Conference. I am sure that his address will be followed with keen interest and attention.

I would also take this opportunity to welcome the representatives of non-governmental organizations who are with us today. As you know, International Women's Day will be celebrated tomorrow and, to mark this event, in accordance with established practice, the participants in the annual International Women's Day seminar have addressed a message to the Conference. I am certain that the Conference joins me in expressing our best wishes to all women present here today, and our appreciation of their constant commitment to peace and disarmament, as well as of their continuing interest in our work.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioan Mircea Pascu, Minister of National Defence of Romania.

Mr. PASCU (Romania): I want to thank you all for this opportunity. I am an academic and during my first years of work I studied the work of your body. At that time, I was merely observing and, to be frank with you, I never imagined that one day I would speak in front of you. I therefore thank you sincerely for giving me this opportunity, which I deeply appreciate.

Mr. President, at the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I would like to assure you and successive presidents throughout this annual session of the full support of the delegation of Romania. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate your predecessors for their intensive and constructive efforts aimed at moving the work of the Conference forward and for the adoption of the relevant decision on the reappointment of the three special coordinators on procedural issues of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would also like to express special appreciation to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who retired recently after serving for almost a decade as Secretary-General of the Conference. His name will remain closely linked with past achievements of the Conference on Disarmament, including the, finalization of the CTBT negotiations. My special thanks also go to Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General, and to the other capable members of the secretariat for their constant and invaluable support to the Conference.

Last year was a particularly difficult one for the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation process, especially with regard to the regimes on weapons of mass destruction, and also as a result of the rapid evolution of international security and stability.

(Mr. Pascu, Romania)

Providing the Biological Weapons Convention with a compliance regime proved to be more difficult than expected five years earlier, in spite of the important efforts by the delegations in the Ad Hoc Group. The suspension of the BWC Review Conference last year provides the State parties with a more than necessary period of time for reflection. Serious and responsible thinking is necessary on the ways ahead for this exercise and for working out a set of balanced and interlocking multilateral international and domestic measures capable of ensuring the full operation of the Convention.

I believe it is clear that the complexity of the issue of biological weapons and the national security, economic and social interests of the States parties necessitate a much broader approach, which goes beyond agreeing upon a stand-alone legal instrument for compliance. Such a compliance instrument must fit into a whole larger set of other international multilateral agreements concluded and functioning outside the disarmament framework.

The brutal attacks against the United States of America marked the transformation and emergence of terrorism, especially State-supported terrorism, into a real and dangerous threat of global dimensions, affecting the security interests of all the members of the international community, including my own country.

As terrorist organizations and networks have proved to be more global in action, employing the highest technology in their operations, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups has become a major objective for us all.

I have chosen to start this analysis of developments in the current international security environment with a focus on BWC issues and the terrorist global threat, in view of the rapid and spectacular developments in efforts to establish the international coalition against terrorism. Romania joined the coalition immediately after the 11 September 2001 attacks and, since then, has sought to bring a responsible and reliable contribution to this exercise.

The international coalition is an outstanding demonstration of broad multilateral international solidarity, cooperation and political will, based upon joint efforts to provide, in a very short period of time, specific measures to be enforced at both the international and domestic levels. This is an important lesson to keep in mind when approaching a future international multilateral compliance regime for the BWC and other agreements in the field of disarmament.

The time has come to bring the process of disarmament and the non-proliferation of armaments closer to other fields of multilateral diplomacy and to bring it into step with the rapid developments set in motion by the globalization process.

This brings me to the current legal framework of multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, which for decades have provided the tools for crafting a long-standing contribution to international peace and security. Most of these, if not all, brought

(Mr. Pascu, Romania)

a tangible contribution to global security when adopted and entered into force. Each of them laid the foundations for negotiating and further adopting multilateral international disarmament agreements. This is after all the essence of the sometimes painful and almost invariably slow process of disarmament.

Romania is firmly attached to the multilateral framework of international disarmament and non-proliferation agreements at both the global and regional levels and will continue to implement in good faith the obligations assumed under the existing legal regimes to which it is a State party. My country is a State party to all major international multilateral treaties governing the issue of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as to the Ottawa Convention, the Open Skies Treaty, the CFE Treaty and other regional multilateral and bilateral agreements on confidence and security-building measures.

Our attachment to collective security is unconditional and we cannot agree with those seeking to abandon multilateralism in international security. Indeed, the history of disarmament shows that changing international conditions could erode the relevance of an international instrument, but the international community remains obliged, in accordance with its responsibilities, to replace such an instrument with agreements able to address the current and future security concerns of all its members. Accordingly, we find merit in the arguments in favour of the need to strengthen and, if necessary, to adapt existing agreements in line with present realities, while remaining engaged in efforts to negotiate and conclude new multilateral international agreements in the field of disarmament.

Accountable compliance and the strict observation of existing obligations are basic prerequisites for a healthy climate conducive to negotiations for new collective security agreements or the adaptation of the existing ones. Universal adherence must remain a constant objective for the multilateral agreements currently in force.

Many distinguished speakers who have recently addressed this sole body for negotiations of multilateral agreements in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control have also pointed out the positive developments of last year. Indeed, the decision to extend the scope of the CCW to armed conflicts other than international conflicts and the recent entry into force of the Open Skies Treaty are relevant steps forward, and Romania will continue to be actively engaged in their implementation.

This year Romania will ratify the amendment to article 1 of the CCW, together with Amended Protocol II and Protocol IV to that Convention. It will also pursue an active contribution to the Ottawa Convention process during the period leading up to the first deadlines for full implementation of the article 4 provisions. We are ready to contribute to the Open Skies Treaty, with our long-standing experience gained over a decade of implementing the Romanian-Hungarian bilateral agreement and in many trial flights performed with neighbouring and other countries.

(Mr. Pascu, Romania)

We recognize also the important contribution to multilateral security of bilateral agreements aimed at reducing arsenals of offensive nuclear strategic weapons and welcome the recent decision of the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation to engage in talks for deep cuts of existing arsenals. In our view, this is a positive development that outlines, once more, the special responsibility of nuclear-weapon States for improving international security and strategic stability.

While pointing out these positive results, allow me also to draw attention to the fact that they have all been achieved outside the Conference on Disarmament.

In the last three years the Conference has not lived up to its main task, and the continuation of the present state of affairs will only further undermine the credibility of this unique multilateral body. And all of this, despite important efforts embodied in a long row of presidential proposals to tackle the divergent items of the programme of work. The sorry result of this sterile, but time and nerve-consuming exercise is that the start of negotiations on FMCT is still wishful thinking years after the adoption of the Shannon mandate and only a few weeks ahead of the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

The rapid adoption of the decision on the reappointment of the three special coordinators on procedural issues is an encouraging signal for the Conference, but it does not replace substantive work on the items of the programme of work, which is the main task of this body.

The Romanian position at the Conference on Disarmament has not changed over the last year and the resumption of the negotiations for FMCT remains a priority for our delegation. We are not in favour, as a position of principle, to any linkage between the items of the programme of work.

On the proposals for the programme of work contained in document CD/1624, tabled during the presidency of Ambassador Amorim of Brazil, our position is flexible. Like many other delegations we can endorse them as such.

My delegation stands ready to participate in a debate concerning the issue of transparency in armaments, one of the non-controversial items of the programme of work. We are witnessing a time when the multiplication of internal conflicts and crises provides ground for the emergence and consolidation of non-traditional threats which tend to take shape as a complex combination of terrorism, ethnic cleansing, organized crime and arms trafficking. Past and recent experiences show that the worst affected categories are the civilian population and the international personnel providing humanitarian assistance and engaged in peacekeeping operations.

In view of the current international situation, it is imperative that we resume the debate on this issue in the Conference on Disarmament in order to prepare the ground for future international instruments intended to ensure the restraint and responsibility both of producers and end-users, while providing for equal and undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments.

(Mr. Pascu, Romania)

I would like here to avail myself of this opportunity to appeal to all delegations to increase their participation in the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms, as well as in standardized reporting on military matters and transparency on military expenditures, in line with United Nations General Assembly resolutions 56/14 and 56/24 Q. In our view, the Conference on Disarmament needs to start substantive work immediately on the so-called non-controversial items, while continuing consultations for a consensual solution to the other remaining items.

Mr. President, as we all know, the Conference on Disarmament is a fine-tuned barometer, very sensitive to international security developments and to the political climate that obtains between key actors on the international stage. Romania, like many other members of the Conference on Disarmament, has approached the current annual session with many expectations for real progress in moving this body out of its stalemate that has already endured far too long.

This delegation continues to believe in the future of multilateral international disarmament and the value of the Conference on Disarmament for international peace and security. We are committed to working closely with all delegations to this end.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister of National Defence of Romania for his address and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I should now like to call on the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, to read out the message of the International Women's Day seminar to the Conference.

Mr. ROMAN-MOREY (Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament): Before I have the honour to read the message to the Conference on Disarmament presented by the International Women's Day seminar, please allow me, in the name of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and on my own behalf, to present our warmest congratulations to all women of the world on the occasion of International Women's Day to be celebrated tomorrow, 8 March 2002.

I shall now proceed to read the message.

"Distinguished Members of the Conference on Disarmament, thank you for giving the annual International Women's Day seminar the opportunity to address you on the occasion of International Women's Day. This day, which actually falls tomorrow, 8 March, has its roots in the centuries-old struggle of women for the right to participate equally with men in making the decisions that determine the economic and social conditions of our societies and concern the question of war or peace. For decades now, women have seen ever more clearly, and particularly those living in regions of conflict, how necessary peace and disarmament are to improving their working and living conditions and the achievement of gender equality. They see disarmament as a necessary means to limit conflict and prevent war, and to free resources to make possible the improvement of economic and social conditions for themselves, their families and their communities.

(Mr. Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament)

"Both females and males need and have a right to a stable and secure environment; women and their children in particular need resources for the full development of their potential. In turn, the fulfilment of their potential will strengthen security and stability for all, and they will contribute still more to the wealth of nations. In this spirit we wish to say here today the following.

"When we addressed this Conference on 8 March last year, we believed that you would break the stalemate that had beset this negotiating forum for several years. We were confident that the conditions were such that would allow you to proceed with the work plan set out in document CD/1624 of 24 August 2000 - the Amorim proposal. We are deeply disappointed and much concerned that today, one year later, the Conference remains deadlocked. From what we heard and read then and what we hear and read now, there is agreement that document CD/1624 is a good basis for consultations with a view to advancing disarmament talks and negotiations. Why then does the deadlock in this forum persist when there is such an obvious need for talks and genuine negotiations on nuclear disarmament, for preventing an arms race in outer space, and for a treaty on fissile material cut-off, as well as for a comprehensive programme for disarmament? Civil society has a right to an answer from this Conference. Disarmament issues are of concern to all people; not only to Governments and civil servants. The issue of what kind of security is everyone's concern, and to be informed is the people's democratic right.

"Following the terrible events of 11 September in the United States of America, the international community rallied to the United States to join it in its response to the terrorist acts. Taking this collective stand kindled hopes for a return to genuine multilateral disarmament efforts. But the opposite is happening: the response to terrorism is primarily manifested in military terms, resulting in demands for increased military expenditures to develop and produce more and newer arms; the insistence on developing a missile defence system risks setting off a new arms race and undermining a long-standing disarmament treaty. Sophisticated weaponry cannot protect us against these new kinds of terrorist acts. Perhaps a better use and sharing of resources to improve peoples' lives would be a more effective means of eliminating terrorism.

"Addressing the United Nations Symposium on Terrorism and Disarmament in New York last October, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, called for a common strategy in the disarmament area to deal with the global challenge of eradicating terrorism. He pointed out that 'weapons-based security not only perpetuated the wrong value system internationally, it also increased weapon stocks and the danger of their diversion to non-State actors and individual warlords with calamitous consequences. The increasing number and sophistication of weaponry and expensive defence systems would not protect us from terrorism, just as the

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derogation from fundamental human rights could not be justified by the fight against terrorism. Disarmament and non-proliferation norms contributed to the battle against terrorism. He stressed that short-term expediency should not lead us to compromise on them, because they would eventually feed terrorism as we had seen from the legacy of the cold war'.

"Everything in the world demands that all States, but in particular the Member States of the Conference on Disarmament, work together to prevent the eruption of a new arms race. Our planet cannot bear it. Money-wise, we can hardly afford the safe destruction of the weaponry that has been agreed to be destroyed. Let us not build more.

"We are concerned by the trend to pull out of or dismiss as outdated international treaties, such as the ABM Treaty, or to refuse to ratify treaties negotiated with patience over long periods of time, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We are deeply disappointed that the lengthy negotiations of a Protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention came to naught.

"We fear that the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to break the deadlock and begin genuine talks and negotiations in accordance with a generally acceptable work plan may have very negative repercussions on the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We fear that the Conference on Disarmament may have become incapable of fulfilling its mandate. What then is the future of disarmament? What is the future of this negotiating forum? We know that there have been periods in the past when the Conference on Disarmament (in its earlier form) was deadlocked. But this does not excuse the lack of movement today when conflicts multiply and arms kill thousands of innocent civilians and whole sectors of populations are massacred, individuals continue to be maimed by landmines still embedded in the soil, and the fear of the use of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors grows. We understand fully that the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating forum, but we must not forget that it deals in essence with very human and humanitarian issues. Knowing how women live in these many conflicts, we cannot help but be impatient at what seems to us to be a lack of a sense of urgency in coming to grips with disarmament and non-proliferation in the interests of all humanity.

"Having stated this, we agree with, and join the delegates to the Conference who, while deploring the deadlock in this forum, have given recognition to positive developments in arms control and non-proliferation concerning small arms and light weapons, landmines and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are also encouraged by the commitment of Governments to continued work on strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention and strengthening of the NPT.

"We are gratified that the Conference has decided again to appoint special coordinators on the review of the agenda of the Conference, on the expansion of its membership and on its improved and effective functioning. An agenda set in 1978 may

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well need some updating. As for the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, we express our hope that the issue of the relationship of non-governmental organizations to the Conference on Disarmament will be seriously taken up during this session. In a letter addressed to the President of the Conference on Disarmament at the start of this session, the President of the Geneva-based NGO Committee for Disarmament expressed the desire of non-governmental organizations to meet the special coordinator to discuss how, in an appropriate way, non-governmental organizations might fruitfully contribute to the deliberations concerning this relationship. We fully support his proposals.

"Distinguished members of the Conference, it is early on in this 2002 session and we maintain our optimism that you will overcome the present stalemate. In this connection we wish to recall the final paragraph of the United Nations Secretary-General's statement to the opening meeting of this year's first session of the Conference on Disarmament: 'The United Nations General Assembly unanimously reaffirmed multilateralism as a core principle in negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation. The Assembly also emphasized the need for progress in multilateral cooperation on disarmament and non-proliferation, to contribute to global efforts against terrorism. It is my sincere hope that this Conference will respond to these challenges with dynamism and determination.' We share his hope.

"From this year's international women's seminar, at which we looked at terrorism, the global order, arms and missile defence, we call on you, we urge you to act now, in the common interest of all citizens on this planet. It is time to come to grips with the proliferation of arms and take a decisive step toward disarmament. We wish you strength in your work."

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, for reading the message of the seminar. I now give the floor to the coordinator of the Group of 21, Ambassador Mora Godoy of Cuba.

Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): On behalf of the Group of 21, I would like to express our appreciation for the important message from the non-governmental organization community on the occasion of International Women's Day. Our group would like to convey its gratitude and respect to those organizations for the sustained support which they have given to the Conference on Disarmament, as well as to recognize the very valuable contributions that they have traditionally brought to the cause of general and complete disarmament and, therefore to the attainment of international peace and security, as has just been demonstrated in the message read out to us by the Deputy Secretary-General.

The members of the Group of 21 appreciate highly the role played by women in all spheres of life and, particularly, in the international movement for peace. Women, with their special sensitivity, have always been able to rise to the challenges that we face in attaining the

(Mr. Mora Godoy, Cuba)

objectives of international disarmament and world peace. It is therefore an honour today for us to be able to convey our own message of congratulations to all the women of the world and, especially, to those distinguished colleagues who have previously formed and who currently form part of the delegations which participate on a daily basis in our efforts in pursuit of disarmament.

We also extend these congratulations to all women members of those non-governmental organizations which, once again, with their statement have given us encouragement and hope and have urged us to step up our efforts to achieve a world free of all weapons, especially nuclear weapons.

Our most sincere congratulations also go to our female colleagues in the interpretation booths and in the secretariat who are facilitating our own work and communication. We would like to convey to all of them our congratulations and best wishes for their good health, and our hope that through our common endeavours, we may succeed in the not too distant future in turning the world into a place of peace and security for the good of humankind.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the coordinator of the Group of 21 for his statement, and I now give the floor to the coordinator of the Western Group, Ambassador Luck of Australia.

Mr. LUCK (Australia): Mr. President, on behalf of the Western Group, it is my pleasure to extend a warm and sincere welcome to all representatives of non-governmental organizations with us today on International Women's Day. I would like to thank the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women for their coordination of the joint non-governmental organization statement just read out to us by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

We have listened with great interest to the views expressed in the joint statement, and agree that the world faces important security, arms control and disarmament challenges in a rapidly changing strategic environment. Indeed, world expectations for progress at the Conference are high. Now more than ever the Conference needs to act. And yet, we find ourselves continuing to share the disappointment and frustration expressed at the ongoing deadlock in the Conference. We can no longer afford for this to happen - the Conference must start work. Accordingly, the Western Group joins in the statement's call to the Conference to adopt a programme of work immediately. And, to this end, the Western Group stands ready to commence negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty, and also to address other key agenda items.

Finally, on behalf of the Western Group, I would like to pay tribute to the representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations present here today for promoting the cause of disarmament and a culture of peace and understanding. And I would like to reassure all representatives that this is and remains our common goal and our highest priority.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the coordinator of the Western Group for his statement. I now give the floor to Mr. Antonov, representative of the Russian Federation, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European Group.

Mr. ANTONOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, allow me, on behalf of the Eastern European Group, to thank the representatives of the international non-governmental organizations for their traditional annual statement on the occasion of International Women's Day, which has just been read to us by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Román-Moray. I would also like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Group, our very best wishes to the women representing the non-governmental organizations and also those women who are heads and members of delegations here at the Conference on Disarmament, the director of UNIDIR and her female colleagues, and the women working in the secretariat and as interpreters, on the occasion of tomorrow's holiday. We are grateful to you all for your invaluable support and participation in our work.

The contribution of women to the campaign for general and complete disarmament and international stability is immense. We are grateful to them for their ever greater efforts in this area and we remain convinced that our joint endeavours both within the Conference on Disarmament and beyond its confines will enable us to ensure that the world in which we live is a safer and more tranquil place, for the benefit of all humankind.

On behalf of the member delegations of the Eastern European Group and of its observers, I wish our dear women colleagues the very best of health, happiness and well-being. I wish you every success in the difficult task that we face together.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Tomorrow is International Women's Day. Please allow me, at the outset, to extend the congratulations and best wishes of the Chinese delegation to all women colleagues present among us, to the representatives of women's organizations and to women staff-members of the secretariat. I have just listened attentively to the message from the women's organizations and would like to express my appreciation for their concern for the cause of disarmament and the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the World Conference on International Women's Year, held in Mexico in 1975, all Governments were urged "to provide women with equal opportunities with men to represent their countries in all international forums where the issues of international peace and cooperation are discussed and in particular in the meetings of the organizations of the United Nations and all conferences on disarmament and international peace and other regional bodies". It is gratifying to note that certain steps have already been taken towards that goal. Please permit me on this occasion to pay special tribute to all women diplomats present here. The participation in the work of the Conference on Disarmament by an ever greater number of women is evidence of the longing for peace and growing concern about the Conference on the part of the international community, including women. Many thanks to you all!

(Mr. Hu, China)

Women not only embody such properties as tenderness, kindness and beauty, they also represent the great quality of maternal love that embraces the entire human race. For a variety of reasons women, more often than not, are the most vulnerable group in society and the direct victims of wars and armed conflicts. Today, women in many parts of the world are being subjected to untold suffering precisely because of war and are therefore all the more anxious for the international community to maintain world peace and security through its multilateral efforts. As one route for the attainment of this cherished ideal is through the pursuit of disarmament, it is only natural that women from all countries should be extensively concerned about and involved in disarmament efforts. The 1975 Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace urged that women as well as men should promote real, general and complete disarmament under effective international control, starting with the nuclear disarmament. It is heartening to note that, over the ensuing 20 years and more, the international community has responded to that appeal by setting in place a relatively comprehensive legal system governing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and fashioned this into an important safeguard guaranteeing international and regional peace and stability. It is essential now that this legal system be maintained, consolidated, strengthened and further developed and not weakened or damaged in any way.

In 1995, in the Beijing Declaration adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, women from all over the world expressed their determination to work actively towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control and to support negotiations and the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable, comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributed to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. Thanks to the strenuous efforts of all member States, that treaty has now been concluded and is open for signature. Today, however, we cannot but be worried that such a hard-won treaty has been rejected and its future looks gloomy. The goal of the complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons, the cherished hope of women the world over, is still far from being attained. The negative development to which I alluded earlier epitomizes the severe problems faced by the process of the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and also bears witness to the abiding unstable and insecure state of our planet. We call upon the entire membership of the Conference on Disarmament to jettison the cold war mentality and to strengthen dialogue and cooperation, in the interest of promoting universal security and accomplishing development for all.

As we look forward to the festivity shared by the women of the world, may I reaffirm the readiness of the Chinese delegation to join all women in their untiring efforts to promote disarmament and to safeguard peace.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

Distinguished colleagues, I would now like to proceed to the appointment of the officers to fill the posts of special coordinators established in decision CD/1667 taken by the Conference at its 893rd plenary meeting on 14 February 2002.

(The President)

It is my pleasure to inform the Conference that all groups have now nominated their candidates to assume these posts and, therefore, the Conference is now ready to appoint, for the duration of its 2002 session, the following officers: Ambassador Eui-Yong Chung of the Republic of Korea as special coordinator on the review of the agenda of the Conference; Ambassador Dimiter Tzantchev of Bulgaria as special coordinator on expansion of the membership of the Conference; and Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka as special coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference.

In this connection, I should like to emphasize that this agreement has been reached on the understanding that the proposed distribution of posts is applicable only to the 2002 session of the Conference and that, in the future, the principle of rotation of the posts of special coordinators as well as of all other tasks and responsibilities in the Conference shall be respected in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference.

With this understanding, may I take it that the Conference agrees to these appointments?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to extend our sincere congratulations to Ambassador Chung, Ambassador Tzantchev and Ambassador Kariyawasam on their appointment and to wish them every success in discharging their important responsibilities. At the same time, I would like to urge the newly appointed special coordinators to embark on their tasks as early as possible, so that they can report on their findings before the conclusion of the 2002 session, as provided for in decision CD/1667.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

Distinguished colleagues, since the third week of my presidency is coming to an end, I would like to present to you a brief report on the consultations that I have undertaken during that period.

My immediate task, as the President was to build upon the achievements of my predecessor, Mr. Tawfik of Egypt, who forged consensus on the re-establishment of the posts of three special coordinators on the review of the agenda of the Conference, on the expansion of its membership and on its improved and effective functioning.

Accordingly, I started my tenure with consultations, involving all the regional coordinators and China, on the nomination of candidates for these posts. As usual in such cases, the main assumption on which I based my consultations was the need for ensuring that a balanced geographical representation among the office-holders was maintained. Other requirements in this regard, some of which had also been raised earlier at the plenary meetings, were reiterated by the coordinators during my consultations. On the one hand, there were views that the distribution of these posts should be subject to rotation among various groups, as had been the case in the past when nominations rotated among the various groups, usually every session. On the other hand, views were expressed that, to the extent possible, the special

(The President)

coordinators nominated last year should be allowed to continue their work since in 2001 they were nominated towards the end of the session and, therefore, were not able to conclude their mandated assignments.

Today, thanks to your spirit of accommodation and cooperation, these consultations have been concluded successfully and the three newly appointed special coordinators are ready, as decided now, to proceed to the implementation of their respective mandates.

From the very beginning, I have also undertaken parallel consultations with the regional coordinators and China on possible ways and means of facilitating consensus on the programme of work of the Conference. It goes without saying that I have based these consultations on the work done by my predecessors. Thus far, I have not detected any considerable changes in the positions of the various groups that would allow us to focus on elaborating specific proposals for making progress. The general findings of my predecessors have not changed; there is still an understanding among the various groups that the proposal on the programme of work contained in document CD/1624 is regarded as a basis for further consultations. On the other hand, at the plenary meetings held during this session, we have witnessed some encouraging developments in the national positions of a number of member States. You will recall that some member States have expressed their readiness to adopt the proposed programme of work in its present form. In addition, we have heard the reconfirmation of previous statements which clearly indicate that the subsidiary bodies envisaged in document CD/1624 for various agenda items are now, in principle, acceptable to all. It is my duty, however, to emphasize at the same time that there are still substantial differences of views with regard to the mandates of the subsidiary bodies on nuclear disarmament and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. With your kind cooperation, I am willing to use the remaining time of my presidency to explore further this aspect of the programme of work.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize once again the need for the continuation of the business-like dialogue among the members of the Conference at the plenary meetings. The 2002 session has been marked, so far, by the renewed interest of member States to use this mechanism - in fact one of the many such mechanisms available to us at this stage - to advance the work of the Conference.

I sincerely hope that this trend continues.

Before we adjourn the meeting, I should like to request a meeting with the group coordinators after the adjournment of this meeting, in room I, our usual room.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 14 March, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.